



What does an Animal Health Official do?  
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What comes to your mind when you think of animal health officials? A veterinarian investigating an outbreak of an unusual infectious disease in a herd? A livestock inspector issuing movement permits for animals coming into California from other states? An inspector assessing the quality of meat or milk? An animal health technician testing horses for illegal drug residues prior to a show? All of these images are correct, along with many others! You'd be amazed at all the things animal health officials do!

### **Where do they work?**

State animal health officials in California work in the Animal Health and Food Safety Services of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Their headquarters is in Sacramento, but teams of individuals are spread strategically throughout the state, and are organized into districts. Many states have a comparable organization, although it may be called by a different name, with a similar mission: To promote and protect the health and welfare of animal agriculture, and to assure that food animal products are safe for consumers. Animal health officials come from different educational backgrounds; many are livestock veterinarians, animal health technicians, or college graduates with degrees in animal science or a related field. Individuals with analytical, clerical, computer and data management skills are an important part of the team.

### **How is Animal Health and Food Safety Services organized?**

Animal Health and Food Safety Services consists of four (4) branches and laboratory support:

- ***Animal Health*** - The Animal Health Branch is the veterinary medical unit that effectively responds to animal health emergencies and protects livestock and poultry, consumers, and California's economy from catastrophic animal diseases. Prevention, detection, immediate containment, and eradication of emergency animal diseases are the highest priority of the Animal Health Branch. The Branch works with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to address emergency issues and eliminate diseases which were once widespread such as swine pseudorabies, bovine tuberculosis, and brucellosis.
- ***Meat and Poultry Inspection*** - The Meat and Poultry Inspection Branch supervises and inspects slaughter and processing plants to assure that California consumers have a safe food supply. Inspectors work at 51 poultry slaughter and processing facilities, 44 livestock custom slaughter establishments where owners may have their animals slaughtered, and at 81 retail meat and poultry processors where meat is cured and smoked for retail sales. The branch also licenses and inspects renderers, dead haulers, pet food slaughters and processors, and grease transporters to keep inedible material out of edible channels.
- ***Milk and Dairy Foods Control*** - This Branch ensures that milk, milk products and those

resembling milk products are safe and wholesome, that they meet state and federal compositional requirements, are properly labeled, and are represented to the consuming public in a truthful manner.

- ***Livestock Identification*** - Brand inspectors inspect cattle and ensure that changes of ownership and animal movements are done in accordance with regulations. Did you know that cattle must be inspected before they are sold, prior to transportation out of state, prior to slaughter, prior to release from a saleyard or public auction, upon entry into a registered feedlot, and prior to release from a premises designated as quarantined? The right to record and use a livestock brand is a privilege regulated by the branch. As of June, 1999, the branch had 23,187 brands recorded! In addition to inspections and brand regulation, this branch checks documentation on cattle in transit, and deals with stray cattle.
- ***California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory*** - This diagnostic laboratory operates under a contract with CDFA and is administered by the School of Veterinary Medicine, UC Davis, and assists with surveillance and diagnosis of animal diseases.

### **Inside the Animal Health Branch**

To better serve the livestock industry of California the Animal Health Branch has four (4) districts, each with a team of veterinarians, livestock inspectors, technicians, and support staff. The California Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory System is also strategically located to serve the livestock industries of the state.

Contact numbers for the California Department of Food and Agriculture - Animal Health Branch:
Headquarters (916) 654-1447
Redding District (530) 225-2140
Modesto District (209) 576-6330
Fresno District (559) 237-1843
Ontario District (909) 947-4462

Main programs in the Animal Health Branch include:

**Emergency Disease Program** - This program strives to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and assist livestock industries with recovery from foreign animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease, hog cholera, exotic Newcastle disease in poultry, and "mad cow" or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, among others. Activities to achieve these goals include: investigating unusual occurrences of livestock disease; participating in local, state, and federal disease simulation exercises; and educating producers about foreign animal diseases. Every month the program reports whether or not specific diseases, identified as important by the International Office des Epizooties, are diagnosed in California livestock. This information, given to the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health in Fort Collins, Colorado is

then summarized with information from other states to give a snapshot of animal health in the United States. Another of the many functions of this program is to monitor vessel and aircraft garbage entering from foreign countries. Did you know that *all* international garbage, even leftovers from that gourmet meal served on the flight from Paris, is cooked to 212°F for two (2) hours before being disposed of in a landfill? If the garbage weren't heated, it could potentially transmit a bacteria or virus that could spread through the livestock industry. Even a garbage can onboard an international ship must be covered as the ship comes within 12 miles of a US coastline. This prevents a seagull from grabbing the garbage and carrying it to land, perhaps to your farm, where it can potentially spread disease.

**Surveillance and Monitoring** - One of the functions of this program is to issue livestock movement permits for over 150,000 animals/year. It also monitors shipments that cross at the 16 California Agriculture Border Stations, and coordinates saleyard inspections. In 1998, 17,818 shipments of 2.3 million cattle, swine, sheep, goats, and horses and 2 million birds entered California.

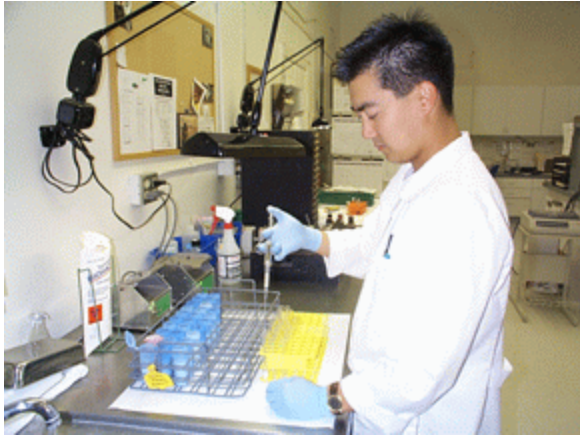
**Animal Production Food Safety** - This group was formalized in 1997 to enhance food safety in California. The group performs research projects with emphasis on *Salmonella* and *E. coli* 0157:H7, assists the Department of Health Services in investigations of food-borne disease outbreaks originating in livestock. It also facilitates quality assurance programs in egg, poultry meat, and beef production, and assists the industry with antibiotic residue avoidance. Education and outreach are major components of the new group and they are active with the University of California and the Dairy industry in educating dairy producers concerning proper animal manure disposal and usage.

**Animal Care** - A new program began in 1997 to address the humane handling and care of livestock. Specific issues include: handling and transportation, slaughter and euthanasia, and routine management practices (castration, dehorning, tail docking, and branding).

**Biologics** - California is the only state in the nation that licenses vaccines for use in animals, whereas other states rely on the federal government. The program regulates vaccine production and field trials within the state, as well as importation of certain laboratory organisms.

**Equine Medication and Monitoring** - The mission of this program is to prevent the misuse of drugs and medications, such as stimulants, depressants, tranquilizers, anesthetics, anabolic steroids, and soring agents in show and sale horses. Approximately 400-500 events from the 1,700 shows and sales held in California every year are randomly selected to have horses tested. If warranted, the program then levies fines and suspensions for violations.

**Brucellosis** - The goal of the national program, begun in 1934, is to rid the country of this bacterial disease which causes abortion in cattle, sheep, and goats, and undulant fever in people. To date, the United States has invested over \$3.5 billion to eradicate brucellosis. California identified its last infected beef cow in 1992, last infected dairy cow in 1996, and quarantined the last infected herd in 1996. After years of work, brucellosis free status was attained in 1997! The program continues to monitor for brucellosis by testing milk from all dairies four (4) times per year, testing blood of all slaughtered adult cattle (650,000 samples per year), and vaccinating calves. Private veterinarians assist the program by vaccinating over 726,000 calves per year!



**Tuberculosis** - Tuberculosis (TB), like brucellosis, is a serious disease of both people and animals. Although pasteurization will kill the bacteria in the milk of infected animals, the United States has been attempting to eradicate bovine tuberculosis for over 80 years! Surveillance for lesions in slaughtered animals and TB skin testing of herds have been the hallmarks of the eradication program. In California in 1998, 22,000 cattle were TB tested by animal health officials and private veterinarians. California has currently applied for "TB free status".

**Pseudorabies** - The pseudorabies national control program requires that interstate shipments of pigs be controlled and monitored to assure that diseased animals do not enter California, slaughtered animals are tested for evidence of the disease, and outbreaks of disease are investigated and controlled. In 1998, the fair community assisted the pseudorabies control program by coordinating the testing of 13,857 fair pigs from 52 counties! This testing helped identify two (2) additional facilities with pseudorabies exposure and allowed veterinarians to control the disease.



**California Animal Response in Emergency System (CARES)** - This new program is concerned with public health and safety and the welfare of animals during disasters such as floods, fires, and earthquakes. The Animal Health Branch coordinates the program along with the Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). Each county is encouraged to have a county animal coordinator and a disaster plan to provide care and shelter for animals during a disaster. If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved, contact the CVMA at (916) 344-6147 to get the telephone number of your local animal coordinator, or

visit the CVMA website at [www.cvma.net](http://www.cvma.net).

What a list of diverse activities and programs, and that is just the Animal Health Branch. You would also be surprised at all of the duties performed by that officials in Milk and Dairy Foods Control, Meat and Poultry Inspection, and Livestock Identification.

**What can you do to protect animal agriculture?**

- **If you live in California and have livestock or poultry, you should know the telephone number of the nearest Animal Health Branch district office.** The district office can assist you with questions regarding animal movement requirements to enter California (health certificates, testing requirements, and movement permits), and assist you and your veterinarian with the work-up of any unusual or suspicious illness in your herd or flock. The CDFA website at [www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov) may also provide you with valuable information.
- **Know the telephone numbers of the nearest Animal Health Branch and Milk and Dairy Foods Control district offices.** The Animal Health Branch can assist you with questions regarding animal movement requirements to enter California (health certificates, testing

requirements, and movement permits), and assist you and your veterinarian with the work-up of any unusual or suspicious conditions in your herd. The Milk and Dairy Foods Control Branch can assist dairy producers with milk quality issues.

<b>Animal Health Branch</b>	<b>Milk and Dairy Foods Control</b>
Headquarters (916) 654-1447 Redding District (530) 225-2140 Modesto District (209) 576-6330 Fresno District (559) 237-1843 Ontario District (909) 947-4462	Headquarters: (916) 654-1274 Sacramento Region (916) 653-7512 Bay Region (510) 622-4808 Fresno Region (559) 445-5909 Ontario Region (909) 923-0359

Other useful telephone numbers include:

Livestock Identification Branch (916) 654-0889  
Meat and Poultry Inspection Branch (916) 654-0504

- **Be aware that unusual conditions in livestock could represent the first case of a foreign animal disease, or exposure to a pesticide, toxin, heavy metal, or poison which could jeopardize animal health and put the food supply at risk.** Notify your veterinarian and animal health official if you suspect that your animals have been exposed to a toxin or poison or if you see any of these signs:
  - Sudden, unexplained death loss in the herd.
  - Severe illness affecting a high percentage of animals in a herd, flock or region.
  - Blistering around the animal's mouth, nose, teats, or hooves.
  - Unusual ticks or maggots.
  - Staggering, falling, or other central nervous system disorders.
- **Never jeopardize the safety of the food supply! Prevent drug residues.** Consult with a veterinarian, extension agent, or pharmaceutical representative regarding treatment of animal illnesses and preventative treatments such as "dewormings". Understand the pharmaceutical products that you give to your animals (read the label and manufacturer's insert), be sure that the product is approved for use in the species you are giving it to, and always use pharmaceuticals at the proper dose, frequency, and route (for example, don't give an injectable product by mouth). Always follow the withdrawal time before slaughter, and if you have a question about the withdrawal time - ASK.

By working together, animal health officials and livestock producers can protect the health of animal agriculture.